

The Poynter Center

for the Study of Ethics and American Institutions *Newsletter*

Indiana University Bloomington

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Nature in the Scientific and Moral Imagination

The third annual Poynter Center Interdisciplinary Faculty Fellows seminar is focusing on the theme, "Nature in the Scientific and Moral Imagination." This year's topic will examine assumptions about nature, human nature, or natural exigencies that guide scientific and humanistic inquiry and artistic creativity. Specific areas of interest include ideas that lie behind "correcting" or "enhancing" natural traits; the natural and its "others" (the conventional, artificial, abnormal, preternatural, supernatural); cultural representations of nature; nature, the law, and/or environmental rights; and gendered, ethnic, or racial constructions of human nature.

The Faculty Fellows for 2005-06 are briefly introduced below. The seminar includes Poynter Center colleagues Richard Miller, director; Byron Bangert, research associate; and research assistants Melissa Seymour, Robert Crouch, and Mark Wilson. The group began meeting in September.



Heather Reynolds, Scott Sanders, Rob Fischman, Betsy Stirratt, Aaron Stalnaker, and Russell Skiba

Biographical sketches:

Robert Fischman is Professor of Law and a scholar of environmental law and policy. Fischman will be studying primary sources of the law (i.e. statutes, regulatory materials,

resource management plans, judicial opinions, executive orders) as a window into social constructs of nature.

Heather L. Reynolds is Assistant Professor in Biology. As a plant community ecologist, her research in temperate grassland and forest plant communities focuses on plant-soil-microbe interactions and the role of environmental heterogeneity. Professor Reynolds will be studying "Ecosystem services: the other infrastructure."

Scott Sanders is Distinguished Professor of English. In his books and teaching, he is concerned with our place in nature, the work of social justice, the practice of community, and the search for a spiritual path. Sanders will be examining the view of nature as a "commons" on which we depend for our sustenance and well-being.

Russell Skiba is Professor in Counseling and Educational Psychology. Skiba's project, "Nature, Nurture, & Prejudice: When is Scientific Discourse Racist?" will review the history of scientific racism, with a particular focus on the field of eugenics in the early 20th century, in an attempt to clarify whether and when scientific discourse can be termed racist.

Aaron Stalnaker is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies. Stalnaker's project "The Nature of Authority: Dependence, Human Nature, and the Justice of Hierarchical Relations," will develop a nuanced account of the scope and character of just hierarchy in human relations that avoids both a romantic rejection of hierarchy and unjustified, anti-liberal authoritarianism.

Betsy Stirratt has been the Director of the School of Fine Arts Gallery at Indiana University since 1987. Stirratt will be investigating the perception of the idea of

“humanity” and “nature” as communicated by visual artists. She will be using certain contemporary works of art to illustrate and address themes related to the body, nature and natural living organisms and their use for artistic purposes.

Two visiting lecturers will present public lectures on the topic as well. Fellows will produce a publishable article or chapter that draws on their seminar discussions and research. The fall lecture was presented October 27 by J. Baird Callicott, from the University of Northern Texas, who spoke on “Naturalizing the Boundary between Humanity and Nature.”

Poynter Center Fellows Colloquium on the Ethics and Politics of Childhood

The 2004-05 Poynter Center Fellows presented their research at a colloquium Sept. 17, 2005. The papers will be published as Poynter Center monographs and will be available later in the fall. The fellows and their presentations are:

- “Protecting Bodies and Minds: History and the Persistent Challenges of American Policies for Children.” Michael Grossberg, School of Law and Department of History
- “Children’s Health and Children’s Rights.” Sandra Shapshay, Department of Philosophy
- “Ethical Principles Guiding Educational Research with Children: Protections and Limitations.” Samuel L. Odom, School of Education
- “The Ethics of Child Custody Evaluation: Advocacy, Respect for Parents, and the Right to an Open Future.” Aviva Orenstein, School of Law
- “A Few Good Soldiers: Civic Education and Conservative Christian

Homeschoolers.” Robert Kunzman, School of Education

- “Is There a Basic Right to Gifted Education? Philosophical Issues in the Debate between Minimal Competency and Maximal Achievement.” Jonathan Plucker, School of Education

Health Care Ethics Seminars

Byron Bangert opened the fall series with a presentation Sept. 8 on “Moral Issues and Motivations in Medical Philanthropy.” The seminar highlighted the findings of the ethnographic study conducted in the last year. Researchers interviewed fifteen physicians, ten medical students and ten premedical students about their motivations for engaging in medically-related charitable or philanthropic activity. Their motives included their upbringing and a sense of obligation. Other motivations included the intrinsic enjoyment of helping others and the interest and fulfillment that volunteer activities provide. The Poynter Center will be publishing a monograph from the study this fall.

Dr. David Orentlicher, who teaches at both the IU School of Law and School of Medicine in Indianapolis and is a state legislator, spoke Oct. 20 on “The Case of Terri Schiavo: The Ethics of Politics and the Politics of Ethics.”

Other topics for the fall seminars include:

- Professor Sandra Shapshay, Department of Philosophy, Nov. 20, on “Lifting the Veil of Ignorance: Justice and Enhancement Technologies in the Dystopia of Andrew Niccol’s ‘Gattaca’ (1997).”
- Dr. Rob Stone, Emergency Department physician and medical director of the Community Health Access Program, Bloomington Hospital, Dec. 8, on our failed health-care system and the need for universal health insurance.

Scientists and Subjects

Ken Pimple, Director of Teaching Research Ethics Programs at the Poynter Center, leads Scientists and Subjects, a ten-week online seminar on the ethics of research with human subjects. The seminar will be offered from January 9-March 19, 2006. Registration information is available at the web site:<http://poynter.indiana.edu/sas/>.

Participants study and discuss four major subject areas: 1. Justifying human experimentation. 2. The Belmont Report and implementing the three principles articulated therein. 3. Informed consent. 4. Therapeutic obligations in research, including non-therapeutic research. The seminar offers Continuing Medical Education credits through the IU School of Medicine. The project is funded by the National Institutes of Health.

New Publications

The Poynter Center has published two monographs from the 2003-04 Poynter Center Fellows study of Democracy and Dissent. The monographs are:

“Democratic Dissent and the Trick of Rhetorical Critique,” Robert L. Ivie, Department of Communications and Culture.

“Federalism and Dissent,” David Clair Williams, Indiana University School of Law, Bloomington.

The monographs are available from the Poynter Center for \$3. Free PDF versions are on our website, <http://poynter.indiana.edu/publications.shtml>.

Poynter Center Director Richard B. Miller and Senior Poynter Fellow David H. Smith each contributed an article to *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics*, edited by Gilbert Meilaender and William Werpehowski, Oxford University Press, 2005.

New Staff

The Poynter Center welcomes two new research assistants this fall. Mark Wilson is a Ph.D. candidate in Religious Studies at IU.

Robert Crouch has interests in political philosophy, philosophy of science, and bioethics. Along with colleagues at the University of Virginia and the NIH, he edited the book, *Ethical and Regulatory Aspects of Clinical Research* (Johns Hopkins University Press: 2003).

At the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics, we welcome two new staff members. Natalie Dobie, who has worked at APPE as a part-time assistant the last year, is the new office assistant. Andrea Elliott, who served in that capacity the last three years, is now program assistant for the IU School of Medicine Geriatrics Program. Katherine Terrell joined APPE as a part-time office assistant.

Teaching Research Ethics

Kenneth Pimple, Director of Teaching Research Ethics Programs at the Poynter Center, will lead the 13th annual Teaching Research Ethics Workshop May 10-13, 2006. Registration information is available at the web site: <http://poynter.indiana.edu/tre/>.

John Kelsay on Islam & the Political Future

John Kelsay of Florida State University spoke October 6 about Islam and the political future. Kelsay introduced the Islamic theological suppositions of Islam as the natural religion of humanity (the idea that Islam is written on people's hearts), Islam as the driving force of civilization, and the goal of bringing Islam to the people. Al Qaeda and others want to bring the world back to Sharia (Islamic law), free the lands that were once under Islamic rule, and gain freedom to rule their own affairs, free of foreigners and Westerners. The democratic vision proposed by the West, especially the United States, replaces Sharia and Islamic law, leaving the two ideas in conflict. Kelsay counseled a realistic view of the current situation, which includes thinking about Al Qaeda in terms of “just war” theory, conducting a cost benefit analysis and considering realistic possibilities of

what Iraq would look like afterward. Professor Kelsay concluded that the US needs to be wise as well as tough. The injustices of the world outstrip the US's ability to set everything right.

Coming Events

Nov. 9 **William May**, "The President's Council on Stem Cell Research: My Take on its Deliberations," 4 p.m. in Woodburn 101.

Feb. 2 **William Sullivan**, Carnegie Foundation, speaking on professionalism and civic engagement.

Feb. 23 **Ron Green**, Dartmouth College, will present the Matthew Vandivier Sims Memorial Lecture.

Feb. 27 **Martin Marty**, professor emeritus in religious history, University of Chicago.

March 23 **Paul Lauritzen**, John Carroll University.

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The Poynter Center is now able to accept donations through our web site, thanks to the Indiana University Foundation. See <http://poynter.indiana.edu> and select "Support the Poynter Center." Or you can mail a contribution to the Indiana University Foundation, State Road 46 Bypass, Bloomington, IN 47405, with a note stating the donation is for the Poynter Center.

Poynter Center Newsletter

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